

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was a critical step forward in the ongoing struggle for equal rights for women. The time has come to make common sense adjustments to the act in order to make it more effective in fighting gender-based employment and pay discrimination. The [Paycheck Fairness Act](#) (H.R. 1338), will come to the floor of the House this week, and as an original cosponsor of the bill, I plan on voting in favor of it.

Equal Pay for Equal Work

The American dream is undermined daily as women are denied equal pay for their work. Improvement has come too slowly over the past 45 years, with women's wages rising from 59 cents for every dollar earned by a man in 1963 to 77 cents per every dollar earned by a man in 2008. This gap is even worse for minority women, with Latinas earning 52 cents to every dollar – the least of all racial and ethnic minorities as compared to white men. The Paycheck Fairness Act will facilitate the achievement of equal pay between the sexes.

A 2003 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that when all the key factors that influence earnings are controlled for — demographic factors such as marital status, race, number and age of children, and income, as well as work patterns such as years of work, hours worked, and job tenure — there is a 23% pay gap between women and men that cannot be explained or justified.

Taking Action to Support Equality

Women now comprise 59% of the work force, compared to about one-third when the Equal Pay Act was first passed. All working people deserve the same opportunities to succeed professionally and personally. The Paycheck Fairness Act will solidify our commitment to this equality and bring us closer to achieving the ideals put forth in so long ago in the Equal Pay Act of 1963 by closing loopholes in the law that have allowed employers to evade liability, providing tools to improve outreach and training efforts to work with employers, strengthening the negotiation skills of girls and women, and enhancing the collection of information on women's and men's wages.

It is simply unacceptable that in the past 40 years the wage gap has narrowed by less than 20%. We have the opportunity to aid millions of American workers to achieve the American Dream, and so I am proud to support H.R. 1338.